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# Forester - From Dream to Reality

Sharon Abrahamson Kyhl  
*Iowa State University*

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settings. These are the only possibilities. Even when trees and buildings are planned and constructed simultaneously, the trees are always considered secondly. Either way, the tree is not in its natural setting. Because of this, we must study the interactions between trees and other natural landscape features within the urban setting. It is our responsibility, then, to intervene and care for trees and other plants to the best of our ability. I am an Arborist or a forester, or maybe just a knowledgeable intervener.

Lonely and pretty

a tall oak stands alone with  
disgusting buildings

There does not have to be just one oak  
and the buildings need not be disgusting.  
I do not know where my current career  
path shall lead me, but wherever it does,  
I'll be there.

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## Forester - From Dream to Reality

By Sharon Abrahamson Kyhl

In 6th grade I gave a speech that I wanted to be a forester. Ten years later I received my B.S. in Forest Resource Management in college. I worked seasonally in fire with the BLM, on a TSI/Stand Exam crew in Idaho on the Clearwater National Forest, and as the Environmental Ed/Work Project coordinator for a 40 person YCC camp on the Arapaho/Roosevelt National Forest in Colorado.

In June, following graduation, I landed my first job at the headquarters of the Frank Paxton Company in Kansas City, purchasing exotic hardwoods from around the world. I was fortunate to have

a job, but was not cut out to sit behind the desk. Much to several professors' chagrin, I resigned six months later and was off to Colorado.

I investigated starting my own business with several classmates doing Stage 2 Inventory for the U.S. Forest Service. However, I needed money, and decided to take another seasonal job in timber sale layout and cruising on the Routt National Forest. It proved to be a good move. I gained some great seasonal experience. I was hired that fall as a permanent employee - not as a forester, but as a receptionist in Steamboat Springs at the Supervisor's Office. The Forest hired at least five of us through the backdoor and we were all able to gain Forester conversions within the year.

I then transferred to Kremmling, CO as a Pre-sale Forester and Timber Sale Administrator. I completed several environmental analyses for timber sales, laid them out, cruised them, and then even got to administer the sales. You learn a lot when these old loggers are showing you where you "screwed" up and what looked good.

I became a Silviculturist after the FS sent me back to school at Arizona State, Utah State, and Colorado State. Before I was actually able to put it all into practice, I had an opportunity to go into range conservation and recreation on the same District. It was a challenge that I thoroughly enjoyed. Not being much of a horsewoman, I had a lot of ranchers put me to the test in a lot of rough country. I must have passed the test, as I'm still alive!

Meanwhile, I fell in love with a fellow Forester Clint Kyhl, from Iowa State and we got married. He got in the door as a clerk on the District and then got a Forester offer on the White River National Forest. They had a Silviculturist position on the adjacent



district, so we made the move. We both gained some new experience, but I was getting tired of the 40 mile commute each way, especially after we had our son, Keith.

There was a recreation position being advertised on the Pike/San Isabel National Forest that I was interested in if there was something for Clint. They thought they could get him on an adjacent District, but it was a terrible commute. They didn't give up and were able to move another employee who was ready to transfer to make room for us. We ended up taking two of the three staff positions.

I had the recreation, fire, roads, and law enforcement program and since then have become more specialized in recreation, wilderness, trails, special uses, rural economic development, and heritage resources. There is a lot of community involvement and grant writing, so it is a real challenge.

Our District was also one of the creators of the Wilderness Box Curriculum that has gone nation-wide. Much like the Project Learning Tree, this goes one step further by having a trunk of teacher/student materials consisting of skulls, skins, books, videos, and other ecosystem materials. I'm also responsible for the Wilkerson Pass Interpretive Center which receives over 150,000 visitors in the 4 months that we are open. It is the base for all our interpretive programs that are scheduled throughout the District at 21 campgrounds.

Meanwhile, we had another son, Craig. I feel fortunate to be both a mother and a forester. The Forest Service has been wonderfully supportive of our dual career and family, and though we are not moving up the ladder as quickly as some, we feel our quality of life and the challenges we face are exciting.

I really believe if you want something bad enough, you will succeed. But it takes a lot of hard work - going beyond the call of duty, even as a seasonal. So many college students we hire for the summer now have the attitude that we owe them something. It's extremely competitive to get a job in these times of downsizing and if I have an employee with a good attitude - going the extra mile to complete the job, and not whining, - they are going to come out ahead.

I also believe it's important to be actively involved in your professional society - Society of American Foresters. This can be extremely beneficial if you are looking for jobs as you have the opportunity to meet private consulting foresters, state and federal foresters, and academia. It's a great network to belong to, but it takes a commitment on the member to make it worthwhile.

Best of luck to you all.

